DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 104 869 SP 009 109

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TITLE British Teacher Centres and New York's Experience with Competency-Based Teacher Education.
PUB DATE 13 Feb 75
NOTE 17p.; Presented before the National Commission on Performance-Based Education (Washington, D. C., February 13, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Higher Education; *Performance Based Education; *Schools of Education; State Programs; *Teacher Centers; Teaching Skills
IDENTIFIERS Great Britain; *New York

ABSTRACT

Teacher Centers began less than ten years ago in England. The English Teacher Centers are governed by the teachers themselves and are financially supported by the local educational authority. The various centers have two functions in common: (a) curriculum development; and (b) inservice education. In the United States, there are at least 4,500 programs listed as competency based, yet the procedures now used to accredit teacher education programs do not provide data on program quality, especially as it relates to the capabilities of students completing the program. The move towards Competency Based Teacher Education (CBTE) in New York has been in response to criticism of the area's master's programs and teacher education courses. As accreditation procedures are improved, the focus for determining a program's potential will center on (a) competencies and attitudes that the student should demonstrate at the completion of the program, (b) evidence that they have been achieved, and (c) contributions made to the teacher education program by the university, school district and the teachers. Serious study has been given in New York State to CBTE, especially through twelve trial projects which were initiated in 1971. These projects deemphasized education courses and concentrated attention on the prospective teacher's ability to bring about predictable accomplishment on the part of students. (JS)

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BRITISH TEACHER CENTRES
AND NEW YORK'S EXPERIENCE
WITH COMPETENCY-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION

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SP009 109

NOTE: The attached remarks were made on February 13, 1975, in Washington, D.C., before the National Commission on Performance-Based Education.

BRITISH TEACHER CENTRES
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Last December, I, along with several others, visited several teacher centers in London, Nottingham, and York, located in rural as well as metropolitan areas. This trip was sponsored by IDEA (Institute for Development of Educational Activities) an affiliate of the Kettering Foundation. I strongly suspect that we visited only the best ones. We saw no bad ones and there are some.

Stephen Bailey, now with the American Council of Education and a former distinguished member of our Board of Regents, had visited British teacher centers in 1971; others have, too. Articles written by them rather substantially exaggerate the extent of participation by teachers, the effectiveness and the resources of the teacher centers. That these writers have romanticized the teacher centers of Great Britain was a clear consensus of our group.

At least some of our school districts would put to shame many of the teacher centers in England. I fully expected to see great orgasms of innovation, orgies of apocalyptic reform, and glittering arrays and sybaritic splendors of audio-visual and resource materials, as well as gaggles of teachers anxious to avail themselves of these teacher centers.

Not so. They do serve an important function or functions, nevertheless, for some, perhaps many teachers.

Teacher centers began about less than ten years ago in England. There are over 600 now. They are headed by wardens, part or full time. Wardens are former teachers. It is curious that most teachers who use the centers are elementary teachers, but the wardens we saw were all former secondary school teachers.

Teacher centers have two functions in common: curriculum development and inservice education. Some serve as materials resource centers for the schools in an area as well.

Teacher centers grew out of several trends in England, not all of them universally observable in other countries: rapid change in knowledge, the development of a universal system of education to higher grade levels and for more children; a more pluralistic society (there has been a recent great influx of immigrants--particularly Indians and blacks). There was a high turnover of teachers, secondary ones especially. Thus, both new and older teachers were seen as needing these teacher centers.

Here in America, teacher centers are seen as needed because we are engaged in the management of decline in American education. There are surplus resources because of declining enrollment, few new teachers are needed--old ones need to be retreaded.

Also, I suspect that here in America, the relatively new teacher militancy and union claims for greater independence have something to do with the development of teacher centers. In England, the unions as such

have little interest in the teacher centers. Teachers are, historically, extremely independent.

The teacher centers are governed by teachers themselves, representing the schools in the particular area. Financial support comes from the local educational authority (equivalent to our school boards) and ranges from very little to a fairly substantial sum (a few to thousands of pounds). Teachers themselves contribute marginal amounts voluntarily for social food and beverage costs.

There are few new buildings erected for the purpose. Most probably are in old schools or old buildings formerly housing other activities (one was a former jail, or an orphanage, I can't remember which, another an old school building having still a few regular elementary classes).

Let me quote Stephen Bailey on what goes on in these teacher centers:

> The key to the success and the enthusiasm associated with the teachers' center notion is control by local teachers. In consequence, center facilities and programs vary widely, depending upon the definition of need constructed by the local teacher-controlled center committees working intimately with local center leaders or wardens. Some centers limit their curriculum investigations to a particular field like math or science; others attempt a wholesale review of the adequacy of an entire curriculum by grade or age; others have a strong social emphasis; still others feature outside lecturers and exhibits of new materials. Many centers feature formal inservice training courses; others stress informal workshops; still others provide facilities for self-study. Some centers are primary school-oriented; others draw heavily from secondary schools, some do both. Some attempt to draw in students, parents, supervisors, professors of education, and others directly related to the educational process; others keep such types at arm's length and relish the sense of teacher autonomy and the sense of dignity that come from self-directed accomplishment.

Some centers attract a lot of the teachers from the local schools, some draw only a few. There are few opportunities for demonstration purposes with classes of students.

Let me now give you some impressions.

1. As I said earlier, teacher centers do serve a useful function. The sudden establishment of 600 teacher centers in England, which has an educational community that is not as imitative or status-concerned as we are, suggests a real need and valid purpose. (Someone once said that the fastest moving vehicle in a vacuum is a bandwagon.)

2. These centers are often under-supported, under-resourced.

3. They are often ambiguous in function. Their purposes are not always well-defined either in theory or practice. Perhaps this is because they are evolving still.

4. The centers and their wardens are often self-conscious, the latter insecure about their jobs. It seems to me they are often entrepreneurial, over-selling and over-dramatizing their services and effectiveness. Perhaps this comes about because they are relatively new; many of them need more clients than they have; budgets are being cut back in this period of England's austerity.

5. While wardens seem to know their role and function, the local educational authorities, though supporting teacher centers, have not yet entirely sanctioned them as indispensable. This probably also leads to feelings of insecurity and ambiguousness as to future development. The teacher centers, one person said, will not be fully accepted until they

infiltrate (the word used) the local educational authorities (local school boards) through placing wardens in them as local advisors to the schools. This is happening gradually. After all, we are seeing some first generation wardens graduating, so to speak, to higher office as local school advisors.

6. The wardens are uniformly of high competence, very bright, very professional teachers, articulate. Not all of them are aggressive in seeking to enlarge their clientele.

7. Many, perhaps most teacher centers are small and have part-time wardens.

8. Most activity occurs after school hours, for which teachers are not paid. Paying for substitute teachers during the day is an increasing problem.

9. The social function of these centers was much more striking than I had been led to expect. England, and especially London, has a high turnover rate for teachers. New teachers have little chance for socializing and exchanging ideas in their schools and find that the teacher centers fulfill these functions, at least in part. Although the quality of tea and biscuits served varies widely, some teachers at least use the teacher centers for socializing (and getting something to eat before a very long ride home).

10. Attendance at these teacher centers is becoming, slowly, more important for credentialing and pay increase purposes.

11. I was more than surprised to find that university resources are

little used. Some universities are becoming more aggressive in relating to the teacher centers. ("Since the bloody professors had so little to offer them in the past, why should the teachers now seek their help?") One can see in developing relationships among the local educational authorities (with their local educational advisors to schools), the teachers colleges, the universities, and the teacher centers, potential for conflict and confrontation. Is there an overlap in function and who will coordinate them, are the questions. Moreover, teachers uniformly in England have a much greater sense of autonomy than is the case in the United States. One's own turf, territorial imperatives, and independence are very precious possesions. Teachers there, genetically, don't like to be managed.

There is a growing conflict in teachers involving an extreme, inherent individualism versus a growing professionalism, that is, a conflict between being autonomous, on the one hand, and needing professional help from other academic sources, on the other.

12. One university professor in York said this: Systems abhor a rogue. Teacher centers can criticize the status quo and the educational establishment because they are independent, innovative and new. I doubt that they do serve much of a critical function, however.

13. None of the teacher centers does much for the principals (headmasters and mistresses of the schools). Some of the polytechnic colleges do so, however. Anyway, there does not seem to be an overall global concern in England for the retraining of all educators, for instance, superintendents, assistant superintendents, custodians, bus drivers, teachers,

and principals, as is the case here.

14. A famous governmental report called the James Report, projected several phases in the development of teacher centers. A critical phase calling for increased support of the teacher centers will go unfulfilled because of England's economic situation. This is leaving teachers frustrated and with shattered expectations.

15. Wardens are not free or candid in admitting or articulating the weaknesses of their own centers, but I guess this is human nature.

16. Teacher centers are more ambiguous than not concerning the need for parental involvement. The question is, is this a long-term problem to be solved, and because teacher centers are new, should they not tackle only one problem at a time. Schools and teachers in England do not systematically have Parent-Teacher Associations and comparatively few schools involve parents.

17. There is little available evidence of specific data on evaluation of the performance of these centers or even specific attendance figures. As a matter of fact, wardens hardly think of these matters. Here in America, we have a hard time believing anything until it is proven in bloodless scientific terms. England seems to be different.

18. One of the almost uniformly nagging questions is, how do the wardens attract or get more teachers to participate--those who are apathetic, those married, those who think they do not need any help.

In New York State, we have been interested in teacher centers and state-subsidized inservice education conducted by teachers, themselves,

for a long time, ever since Sputnik in one form, since the early 1970's in a more refined form, something like an American adaptation of the British models (though there is no one model in Great Britain).

More recently some of us in the Council of Chief State School Officers have been working with various national organizations, and particularly with Senator Mondale, in developing a teacher center proposal for Federal funding. More details will be furnished during this conference, I am sure. I would hope that the Federal legislation, should it come about, would be flexible and provide for the support of several different kinds of teacher center models in terms of scope, governance, and size. I would not expect a massive program at first, in view of our economy, perhaps only a pilot program. (Although I am unhappily reminded that a pilot program is only a way of stimulating action without spending much money.)

At the same time, I am aware, as a recent issue of Education USA reports, that a recent survey by Syracuse University shows that 4,500 teacher centers exist in the United States. I doubt that this figure represents fully blown teacher centers as I would understand them to be, but, instead, everything that involves teachers in some aspect of re-education.

In any case, we have much to do to improve our educational system, the teaching and learning process, particularly in our cities, and surely we must try this promising new departure of teacher centers. We also just might improve dissemination of new ideas, good teaching techniques, and materials, and improve relationships among the several participants in the educational process. We surely will put the monkey on the back of

teachers, which they have asked for, for improved educational effectiveness by supporting them in this new venture.

Now let me speak briefly on the New York experience with competency-based teacher education.

The procedures now used to accredit teacher education programs provide helpful information about the organization and operation of the proprietary program. However, they do not provide significant data on program quality, especially as it relates to the capabilities of students who complete the program.

As accreditation procedures are improved, the focus for determining a program's potential and, hence, whether it should receive initial approval, will center on answers to the following questions:

a. What competencies and attitudes should the student demonstrate at the completion of the program?

b. What evidence will be acceptable to demonstrate that the competencies and attitudes desired have been achieved?

c. What contribution to the teacher education program will be made by the university, the school district, the bargaining agent (school teachers), and others?

d. What steps are being taken to introduce the concept of demonstration of competencies in relevant components of the non-professional-education portion of teacher education programs?

Certification of teachers at the present time tells us little beyond two things: That the student is intellectually not inadequate; that the

teacher presumably has some interest in teaching. Current teacher certification says very little about the competence to teach.

Since 1967, significant study has been given in New York to a performance-based program of teacher education, certification, and practice. The first real evidence of progress took place when the Board of Regents (our State Board of governance) sanctioned 12 trial projects in 1971.

These trial projects--initial attempts at a performance-based, field-centered approach to teacher education and certification--were the culmination of 5 years of discussion, conceptualization, and broadened understanding. Trial projects involved schools, colleges, professional staff, and teachers in training. Schools had to identify their objectives, the competencies that are influential, and the training programs to develop those competencies. These projects deemphasized the number of education courses and concentrated attention on the prospective teacher's ability to bring about predictable accomplishment on the part of students.

The term "performance-based" teacher education is used in many different ways, but it is here used in a particular way. Teacher education is construed as performance-based if the competencies (knowledge, skills, behaviors) to be demonstrated by the potential teacher are explicit, measurable, and public; if the criteria to be employed in assessing competencies are based on the competencies, explicit, and public; and if the assessment of the potential teacher's competencies uses his performance as the primary source of evidence and if it is objective. It is also imperative that the potential teacher's rate of progress through the

teacher education program be determined by demonstrated competency and that the program facilitate the learning of the competencies.

"Field-centered" is another term with many meanings, but as used here it means that most, but not necessarily all, teacher education should be conducted in schools or in other educational agencies in the community. Field-centered preparation may include simulation, games, and other methods that are reality-related to develop particular desirable behaviors in the prospective teacher.

Now let me retrace a little bit of history in New York.

Near the end of the last decade our regular reviews of college programs had confirmed problems of proliferation, low admissions standards, inflationary grading and unclear purpose and direction at the master's degree level. The Department undertook, within its regular responsibilities, an intensive examination of master's programs in the 1969-70 academic year. The subsequent report made note of the vast growth in numbers of programs, the frequent occasions of loose administration with little supervision or appraisal, the almost indiscriminate admission of students to programs without even a minimum of screening, poor advising of students, and inadequately prepared faculty members.

In 1973-74 and continuing in the 1974-75 academic year, we undertook to review in some detail the master's level programs at a number of the institutions we had studied in 1969. We concentrated first on programs felt to be most seriously deficient and on programs attracting a large number of students.

With the results of the evaluation in hand, a number of the institutions visited moved to eliminate or consolidate graduate programs. Each institution's report has been handled individually so that the university might either take the necessary corrective action to overcome weaknesses or to eliminate weak programs.

The Master's study also highlighted the impact of certification requirements on graduate work. In the hope of strengthening teacher education, a master's degree requirement had been added in the 1960's to most teacher certification requirements for permanent licensure. The requirement that all teachers pursue graduate study for permanent licensure led many institutions to establish part-time graduate programs for teachers that did not have the quality characteristics normally expected for graduate study.

As a change agent in this regard, the Department sought to develop a performance-based program of teacher education. Such an approach evolved from the many field consultations made by staff in the period from 1968 to 1972. The concept was spelled out in the 1972 Regents Statewide Plan and was the subject of numerous statewide, regional, and professional group meetings with school and college personnel. In 1972, for example, the New York State United Teachers and the Department co-sponsored a series of eight regional meetings on competence-based teacher education. The following year, staff of the Department held 17 area meetings in the late afternoon and evenings so that teachers could attend and become better informed.

The essence of a competence-based or performance based--the terms are used interchangeably--system of teacher preparation, to repeat, is to seek from the colleges explicit statements relative to the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they plan to provide prospective teachers. Colleges must derive these competencies from their firsthand familiarity with current classroom practice. The college must demonstrate to the Department how it will assure that its new teachers are so prepared in the specified skills, knowledge, and attitudes. In addition, a competence-based teacher education program links more closely the school administrators, school teachers, and college faculty into the determination of required competencies for future teachers. All three parties collaborate in program planning.

The move toward competence-based teacher education, then, is to be seen partly as a response to the criticism of master's programs, since so many programs had teachers as their sole audience, and also as a response to the widespread criticism of teacher education courses.

No attempt was made by the Department to tell colleges what skills, knowledge, and attitudes were pertinent. Such action would indeed have been an infringement of academic determinations. The Department does seek collaboration between schools and colleges in the process of arriving at the necessary competencies for teaching so that a teacher's professional study relates explicitly to the tasks being carried out in the schools themselves. These criteria become all the more significant requirements when it is recalled that teaching is one of the few professions where licensure

requires neither an internship nor a formal (or informal) test for entry that measures competence.

The Department, of course, found opposition in its moves to strengthen master's programs and to establish a competence-based approach to teacher education. College faculty were being pressed to move from long established and traditional course offerings to a system of specifying exactly what outcomes they expected of prospective teachers. They were asked to provide assurance that the competencies they sought to prepare were those needed and wanted by the schools. One college even has raised the issue of academic freedom to teach as it pleases. Teachers and their unions were understandably distressed to be asked to take a more significant part in teacher preparation without being given additional compensation for that assignment. School administrators found themselves caught between the college and the teachers in assigning the time of their own staff who, after all, had primary responsibility for educating the youngsters of the district. The teacher unions have caused us most distress as they, among other things, seek to intrude collective bargaining issues into the collaborative planning and operational effort. They seem to want to dominate this program.

The Regents established a timetable to guide the redevelopment of programs in the various subject areas and such programs are being submitted to the Department for re-registration in accordance with that timetable. The area of elementary teacher preparation was the first to be asked to register new programs in a competence-based mode, and to

do so by February 1. Eighty-four percent of the institutions preparing elementary teachers have submitted such programs and they are now undergoing staff review. Where particular problems have arisen, the staff is working with individual districts and colleges to achieve a resolution. It is expected that all except three institutions will have filed program proposals with us by February 15.

The net result of these two integrally related moves--strengthening master's level programs and shifting to a competence-based approach to teacher education--should benefit both areas. Master's programs will be under a more watchful continuing review for quality. Those master's programs which primarily attract teachers will be shaped more directly to the needs of the teachers and will achieve a level of quality comparable to graduate offerings in other disciplines. Competence-based teacher education becomes an essential change agent, then, in bringing about these desired changes. We are confident that the problems that are surfacing are not beyond resolution.

EBN 2/13/75